

**Executive Summary****THE CONCEPT**

Agricultural extension is back on the development agenda and two recent literature reviews on extension have agreed that the performance of the Farmer Field School Model is the central “extension question” in discussions in developing countries and among donor agencies (Anderson 2007; Eicher 2007). Proponents of the FFS Model claim that the model is used in projects or national systems in 50 to 70 countries. However skeptics report that the number is inflated because the model has been used in a number of countries and then dropped because of three reasons: limited farmer to farmer (multiplier) impact; the lack of financial sustainability, and lack of tested ICT innovations that have been useful in scaling up FFSs in different countries.

The parallels between the FFS and T&V (Training and Visit) models are instructive. After donors invested \$3 billion in T&V projects in 70 countries over the 1975 – 95 period, the World Bank concluded that the model was 25 percent more expensive than the traditional government extension model in Ministries of Agriculture. As a result, donors terminated their support to the T&V model. This helps explain why action research is needed now on process of institutionalizing FFS in different countries.

**2. RATIONALE AND EVIDENCE THAT THE PROJECT CAN BE SUCCESSFUL**

The Farmer Field School (FFS) model emerged in East Asia in the 1980s when extension workers offered advice to farmers on using IPM (Integrated Pest Management) techniques to control pests in rice mono-cropping areas in the Philippines and Indonesia. The model was remarkably effective in reducing pesticide use on farms in these two countries. The FFS model is reported to being used in around 50 to 70 developing countries. But there is a lack of solid information about the scope of FFS programs. For example, a recent study of extension in Viet Nam reported that after 15 years after experimenting with FFS and “despite convincing impact at the farmer level, the model has not been mainstreamed into the national extension system. Other studies report that farmers completing a school are reported to have limited success in spreading the new technology to their neighbors.

It is now timely to address three interrelated questions: Do farmers who have completed a school (normally farmers attend a ‘school’ in the same farmer’s field one half day a week for 12 to 15 weeks of the growing season) use this knowledge to achieve higher crop yields and increased agricultural productivity? Do farmers who have attended the schools pass new knowledge on to their neighbors? Is the model financially sustainable?

**3. EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT INCLUDING COMMENTS ON SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALE**

Over the past 15 years, Asia has made significant strides in reforming its public extension systems (Sulaiman et al., 2006). Despite these reforms, there has been a limited flow of knowledge about East Asia's experience to Africa because the "package" model and the FFS models were in use in East Asia one to two decades earlier than FFS projects in Africa. There are a number of complementary approaches to studying scaling up the FFS model. One lesson that has been learned is to avoid using the "returns to investments in extension or research" because of the heroic assumptions that one has to use about the diffusion process and the dubious results of this type of research on scaling up extension. Farm level surveys can answer some questions such as the impact on economic empowerment of women. Likewise the diffusion model can be helpful in determining the farmer to farmer flow of information (Rogers) and agricultural innovation studies by Roling and Hall. Since successful institution building involves the process of crafting a system of institutions over time, the use of economic history is critical to understanding why, how and when institutions have been modified. This study covers a twenty year time span between the late eighties. (ICT experts on the Design Team are invited to contribute ideas on measuring the impact of ICT on the performance of FFS projects.

This action research project will be carried out in East Asia, South Asia, and Africa (probably Uganda, Kenya and Burkina Faso). The research issues are complex and they will require three to five years of action studies. One important question that donors are asking is how to define and measure fiscal sustainability because it is often held up as the Achilles' Heel of the FFS model. Sustainability can be defined as the government's willingness and ability to sustain this form of intervention over the longer term within its own budget process. An evaluation of the fiscal sustainability of FFS does not require farm level surveys because it is possible to get fairly reliable judgments by simply collecting aggregate information about the extent of field school activities in areas that had in the past had an FFS project funded by a donor for several years and where donor funding is not present any more. For example, the EU-funded Cotton (FFS) IPM project in Asia was closed in early 2005. It will be relatively simple to compare field school activity with a level of FFS activity when the project was donor funded..

Since donors play such an important role in determining the institutional models to use in agricultural development, it will be important to conduct a survey in Indonesia rice growing areas to check the level of FFS activity now -some 5-8 years since donor funding for rice has ended. The World Bank project was closed in 1999, and the FAO project was closed in 2000.

#### **4. HOW THE PROJECT WILL TARGET THE NEEDS AND BE OF SPECIFIC BENEFIT TO WOMEN SMALLHOLDERS**

The three countries in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Burkina Faso) could be examined by dividing the male and female households and carrying out traditional surveys to determine the ability of male and female households to acquire land, land, credit, markets and education.

#### **5. PROJECTED COSTS OF THE PROJECT**

US \$ 5 million over five years.

## **6. MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

- A number of FFS villages pursuing FFS model over a specified period of time.
- Institutional innovations that have improved the performance of the extension.
- Data on farmer to farmer(multiplier impact)
- Fiscal sustainability.

## **7. RISKS:**

Difficulties in acquiring data on the historical experience of FFS schools in East Asia in the 1990s.

## **REFERENCES**

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